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IOWA CONSERVATIONIST

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Catfishing Number One Sport for Thousands

SEASON OPENS APRIL 15

EACH new year about the time the ice and snow begin to melt and the sap starts to rise in the trees, the catfisherman's tempera-
ture begins to rise. On April 15, opening day, he changes from a ranky, semi-dormant animal into a live and enthusiastic man. Then spring has officially arrived.

In Iowa the "call of the catfish" is being answered by more and more anglers each year, and this gly duckling is gaining a reputation as the "fair-haired child" of the fisherman.

The channel catfish's new reputation is justly deserved for many seasons. He is present in nearly every mile of Iowa's 15,000 miles of stream, and this wide distribution places him within the reach of most of Iowa's 200,000 fishermen.

The catfish thrives in Iowa's heavily silted streams, many of which are unsuitable for other game species. Even during flash floods when streams become soupy with topsoil, this fish may squirt mud through his gills and go on a feeding spree comparable to pigs in a feed lot.

Easy to Catch

The channel cat is easy to catch. The rankest novice may expect to land a fair share even on inadequate tackle, and yet it is versatile enough to test the ability of the most finished angler. The catfish, when only "keeper" size of 12 inches, is a sporty fish, and when he reaches a weight of five or six pounds the amateur fisherman had better call for help. And just to keep the record straight, the dyed-in-the-wool catfisherman, with his specialized catfishing tackle, more often than not ends up with a foolish look on his face instead of a fish on his stringer when he hits a really big one.

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Channel catfish begin to bite with the swelling of the buds in spring. However, most of the larger streams are high during April and May, and the best catfishing success at this time is found in the smaller tributary streams.

State Parks Set for Spring Visitors

By V. W. Flickinger
Chief, Division of Lands and Waters

WHEN the pungent odor of spring bonfires fills the air, the question is frequently asked, "When do the state parks open?" The answer is, "They are open now," for there is no formal opening or closing date. The Conservation Commission believes that state recreation areas should be open during all seasons of the year so that the public may enjoy to the fullest nature's ever-changing picture.

State recreation areas are the "show windows of the land I love the best." They differ from an ordinary show window, in that there is no plate glass barrier, and the scene is never the same. Nature does not stand still, and it is only by constant study and contact with her that one begins to realize that no minute, hour, day, month, or year is the same.

Since the establishment of the first state park in the fall of 1921, and continuing through 24 years of acquisition, development and

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STATE FORESTRY IN IOWA

THE EARLY PERIOD

By G. B. MacDonald
State Forester

(Editor's Note: This is the first of five articles on "State Forestry in Iowa." Subsequent titles will be: "Acquiring State Areas," "The Present State Forests," "Multiple Use of State Forests," and "Administration and Management.")

In the minds of most people, forestry in Iowa is incidental. This is a misconception. Iowa's first pioneers settled in the timbered areas along streams, where the forests provided essential building materials and fuel and made human habitation possible. During the hundred years of occupation we have destroyed much of our timber and have now reached a period where thousands of acres of misused timberland have become eroded and abandoned and must be reclaimed through reforestation. This series of articles is designed to acquaint Iowa citizens with the past, present, and proposed future forestry developments in the Hawkeye State.)

JOCK, when ye hae naething else to do be aye sticking in a tree—it will be growing while ye are sleeping." About 80 years ago Dr. Benj. Green of the Iowa Horticultural Society suggested placing the above motto "on the wall of every rural home in the state." This came at the beginning of a 40-year period when several statewide organizations and many individuals literally campaigned for tree planting on the prairies. The bad effects of severe winter winds was blamed by many on the scarcity of native and planted trees. One enthusiast in northwest Iowa remarked that "more people were frozen to death this year in northwestern Iowa and western Minnesota than have been murdered by the Indians since settlement." This commentator in 1872 was inclined to berate Congress for permitting the sale of the prairie lands before "windbreaks and groves were planted."

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SHORTY HANDLINES A BEAR

"Shorty" Turmelle of Plymouth, New Hampshire, was fishing on Squam Lake with two companions when he noted a dark object in the water. Closer inspection revealed it to be a bear. The animal, apparently near exhaustion, tried to climb aboard.

Armed only with a paddle and landing net, Shorty held the animal off temporarily, then made a noose in a piece of rope and dropped it over the bear's head. One of his companions then speeded up the motor while Shorty "played" the novel catch from the stern. When the bear fought the rope, Shorty fell across the gunwale, cracking three ribs, but managed to hold on. Eventually they beached and dispatched the animal, which weighed 150 pounds!



Catfish are easy to catch, and in many streams they are found in unbelievable abundance. Game wardens patrolling the streams on the ice in midwinter have found stretches where hundreds of thousands of catfish are congregated. With spring weather the fish run upstream. Walt Aitken has a record of a tagged catfish that moved almost 150 miles in 17 days.—Cedar Rapids Gazette Photo.

Catfishing . . .

(Continued from page 121)

Not the least reason for channel catfishing popularity is the fact that its flesh is finely flavored and textured. Except in heavily polluted waters, the channel cat is never strong or rank, a characteristic quite commonly found in some fishes which have long enjoyed game fish status.

The aforementioned qualities have been the catfish's from the beginning of time and do not explain its sudden popularity. Why has the channel cat become the most sought-after fresh water species in this state? It is simply because the average fisherman is just beginning to learn how to catch cats.

A fisherman who is really a catfish crank can invest considerable in specialized tackle, and his bait knapsack may contain an assortment of concoctions that would turn a patent medicine salesman green with envy. He may have expensive rods, lines, leaders, hooks, and half a ton of miscellaneous equipment—and he may catch lots of fish. It is not the catfish crank, however, that has made the channel cat supreme in most of our streams. It is the average fisherman with his inexpensive tackle, his limited knowledge of fishing techniques, and his two or three popular baits. He, too, is catching lots of fish.

Weekend Fishing Popular

This Mr. Average Fisherman may be found along the streams most often on Saturday afternoon or night or Sunday. He will be found in the most inaccessible

places along the Mississippi, Missouri, Des Moines, Skunk, Iowa, Cedar, Wapsipicon, Maquoketa, Turkey, Big and Little Sioux and their tributaries, or on the dozen or so other well-known catfish streams.

The chances are our catfisherman is not fishing alone. He may have brought along his wife and kids. But it is more probable he is with a male companion, an old faithful whom showers, slow fishing, or mosquitoes do not upset. There is probably an intense rivalry between these fishing pals while along the stream, but it is a bet that they present a united front to the rest of the boys at the barber shop where their fish are proudly displayed, and it is a cinch that each verifies the tall fishing tales of the other.

Our average catfisherman's tackle is not elaborate. It consists of a moderately priced steel rod or bamboo pole, a reel, linen line, stringer, and a collection of hooks and sinkers. These items, plus bait (blood, minnows, cheesebait, chicken entrails, shrimp, crawfish and worms, most popular in the order named during the past few years), are the essentials—except, of course, fishing license and ruler.

Upon reaching the stream, our angler searches out a likely location, generally in the shade along a cut bank, where snags or rocks give the water a twisting motion. Then comes the ritual of rigging the tackle, baiting the hook, and casting the line, followed by a grunt of contentment for the fragrance of the woods and the song of the birds. The old pipe is lit, the

SONGBIRDS MOST POPULAR STATE BIRDS

Forty-seven states have state birds, 32 of them designated officially. Songbirds are apparently the most popular, having been chosen by 39 states and also by the District of Columbia. Most favored of all is the western meadowlark, the bird of seven states.

Four states have honored upland game birds—Pennsylvania, the ruffed grouse; California, the California quail; and Oklahoma and Rhode Island, the bobwhite quail. Ohio, the only state to class the bobwhite with songbirds, has the cardinal as its state bird.

Louisiana has chosen the brown pelican; New Mexico, the roadrunner; and Utah, the California gull, to which it has erected a monument in Salt Lake City commemorating the gull's destruction of crickets that threatened the crops of Mormon pioneers in the second year of their settlement. Delaware, the only state to go outside the list of native wild birds, has by legislative action chosen the "blue hen chicken."—Kingsley News Times.

PASSENGER PIGEONS NEST ON MAQUOKETA RIVER, 1844

The October, 1944, issue of Nature Magazine contains an item about passenger pigeons that is of interest to all Iowa bird students. The magazine received the comment from Deborah Davis of Boise, Idaho, who found it in an 1844 almanac belonging to her father. The item quotes the Miner's Express of Dubuque, Iowa, and says:

"A Mr. McDowell came to our office yesterday, and told us that there is an immense pigeon roost in the forks of the Maquoketa, in Jackson County, such as has never been seen in this country before—it is three miles long, and a half mile in width. There can be no estimate made of their numbers. Their roosting places are about a mile distant from their nests and feeding places, being three in number, and each one covering a section of land—and they darken the air with their number and break young trees with their weight, and hundreds are killed by getting entangled in the falling limbs and branches. The people kill them with clubs, and their noise is so loud that when a gun is fired among them, the report cannot be heard—and a person can stand in one spot and shoot all day, the birds returning as soon as you can load. They are building their nests, and the people are alarmed, lest they destroy their crops."

"Everyone can see that the people who hunt are the right people and the people who don't are the wrong ones."—George Bernard Shaw.

cool of the ground creeps into our angler's britches, there's a bump at the bait, and then—. But what am I doing here at this desk? The season's open, and there's catfish to be caught!

State Forestry . . .

(Continued from page 121)

Although some of the older east-states predated Iowa in setting forest administration under a state governmental agency, Iowa is one of the first of the states to undertake a systematic forestry program through organized agencies and societies in semi-official capacity with some state financial support. The same is true in organized educational work in forestry as indicated by the "Iowa



Suel Foster, president of the board of trustees of the State Agricultural College, is one of the pioneers in the establishment of state forestry in Iowa.—State Department of History and Archives Photo.

Agricultural College" bulletin of 1873 which outlined several courses in instruction in forestry and arboriculture in the Department of Horticulture and Forestry.

Protective Value Stressed

The early efforts in Iowa were largely centered on the protective value of the forest, but the need for conserving the state's timber supply was also in the minds of men. A forestry committee of the Horticultural Society in its report of 1871 suggested the "planting of 100,000 acres of white pine under the supervision of commissioners to be appointed by the state." This suggestion had the earmarks of a state forestry move. It is interesting to note that for many parts of the state the white pine has proven to be one of the best of the coniferous species for planting.

The place that the Horticultural Society played in the early development of interest can hardly be over-emphasized. One of the earliest efforts involved the passage, in 1868, of a tax exemption law by the legislature which provided for the reduction of \$100 in the taxable value of farm land for each acre planted to trees. This exemption was for a period of 10 years.

It appeared that this act was not altogether satisfactory, since some land owners used it as a means of curing total tax exemption. Four years after its passage the initial act was amended "so that no person should have more than one-half of his estate free from taxes and no owner of a nursery which is growing stock for sale should be exempt."

This act was in force for a number of years, although some land

owners defeated its purpose by cutting off their planted trees at the end of the ten-year exemption period and then replanted in order to take advantage of the \$100 exemption for each planted acre. The measure as originally passed provided for state support of \$1,000 annually, \$200 of which was to be used for tree planting premiums.

Tree Manual Published in 1874

One of the most noteworthy activities of the Horticultural Society was in its publication of a tree manual in 1874. This activity came about largely through the influence, from across the Missouri River, of Gov. J. Sterling Morton, who had founded Arbor Day for Nebraska during the preceding year. Many of the people of Iowa were ready for the Arbor Day movement, and in 1874 the Iowa Horticultural Society "declared the 20th day of April, 1874, and the same day of each succeeding year as Arbor Day." This declaration has been carried down through the years to the present day through the annual Arbor Day proclamations by the governors of the state.

The forestry manual mentioned above had as one of its principal objectives the offering of premiums for tree plantings of different kinds, but later it included instructions on methods of tree planting and other subjects. This manual was distributed in large numbers for 20 or more years and proved to be one of the best aids in furthering forestry in the state.

That a program for state forest administration was in the minds of some of the early leaders was evidenced in 1873 by a recommendation of the Society to the legislature for the appointment of a Board of Forest Commissioners. The bill suggested provided for the appointment of a State Forester whose duties would be to inform the public on forestry matters and to provide for the establishment of a nursery "for the production of seedlings for planting on state, county or municipal land or along public roads." This proposal was repeated at different times for a period of 25 years.

The need for some state-owned lands for experimental forestry work was urged before the legislature in 1871 when that body was "entreated" to secure funds for forest and fruit tree projects at the Agricultural College. One of the leading men in the state at that time, Suel Foster, in a rather discouraging comment remarked, "We have talked about this often but with no results—and it will happen again."

Later, when Suel Foster became the first President of the Board of Trustees of the Agricultural College, there is evidence that the college did receive funds for developing horticulture and forestry. The appointment of Prof. J. L. Budd and Prof. Henry McAfee to the college staff enlisted the services of two men of influence in this field. Prof. Budd served on a for-

estry commission sent to Europe to investigate trees and forestry conditions. A number of tree species were introduced as a result of his work.

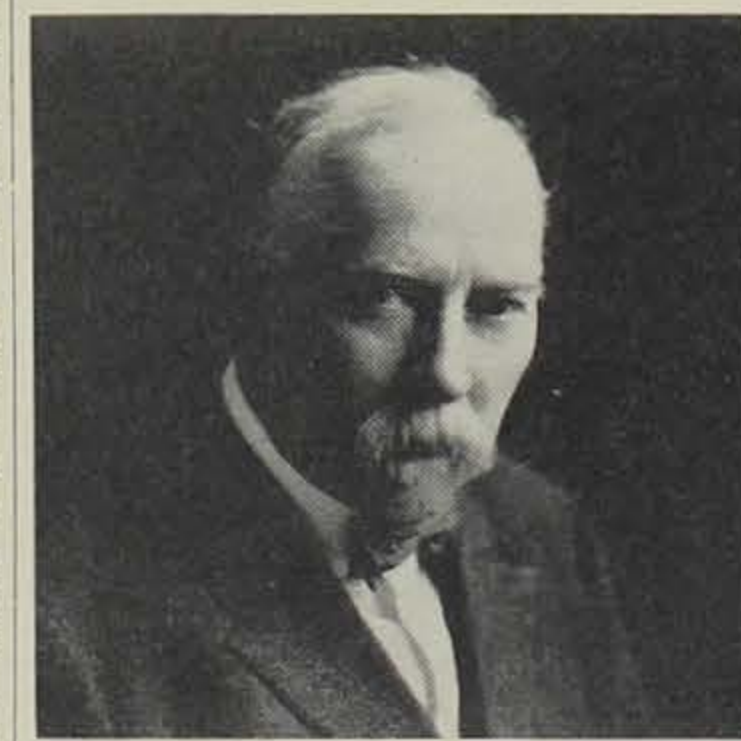
Apparently some of the earlier state legislative bodies were not unlike those of more recent years in the matter of appropriations. One urgent request by the Horticultural Society in the seventies for an annual appropriation of \$50,000 for forestry purposes did not meet with approval of the legislators.

Iowa Pioneer in State Forestry

That Iowa was early recognized as one of the most active states in forestry may be judged by the fact that Prof. Henry McAfee of the Agricultural College was elected Secretary of the American Forestry Association at the first meeting of that organization held in Chicago in 1875.

Another state association of later vintage was the Iowa Park and Forestry Association, which had its organization meeting in Ames in 1901. Among the several objectives of the newly formed organization was the one "To awaken interest in matters of forestry and the protection of our native timber." At the time this association was formed some of the groundwork for forestry had already been laid by the pioneers during the preceding 45 years. However, the need for effort in a broader field of conservation than the tree planting campaigns of the earlier days was in the minds of those who put their efforts into the new organization.

Several outstanding conservationists, whose names are indelibly written in the records of Iowa, were the leaders in setting the program for the new association. Among these men were Dr. T. H. Macbride and Dr. B. Shimek of the State University of Iowa, both of the Botany Department, the for-



Dr. L. H. Pammel, Botany Department, Iowa State College, one of the state's outstanding conservationists, had tremendous influence on the forestry program in this state. Dr. Pammel was chairman of the first State Park Board.—State Department of History and Archives Photo.

mer becoming president of the University in later years. Another member of the "big three" was Dr. L. H. Pammel of the Botany Department, Iowa State College, who later was probably the greatest single influence in the state park

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By M. A. Ellerhoff

Farm Forester
Soil Conservation Service

ONE of the most practical demonstrations in Iowa of how an area planted to trees can return a quick profit is located in Allamakee County, three-quarters of a mile north of the town of Postville. Twenty-eight years after 250 five-foot Carolina poplar trees were set out on a three-quarter acre tract, they produced lumber in the value of \$1,130 for the owner, W. H. Oehring of Postville.



W. H. Oehring of Postville inspecting his Carolina poplar trees prior to cutting. The trees averaged 16 inches in diameter, and each produced an average of two and one-half 16-foot logs.—Soil Conservation Service Photo.

The trees were planted by Dr. Flynn of Postville and purchased by Mr. Oehring when he acquired the 40-acre field of which the three-quarter acre was a part. Bill admits the only care he gave the woodlot was to protect it from fire and livestock grazing. During this time he utilized dying trees as fuel wood.

Last spring, after making an inspection of this woodlot, the owner decided to harvest the tree crop. His decision was based mainly on two reasons. First, the trees were deteriorating quite rapidly. Of the 250 originally planted, only 150 remained. Second, the estimated 20,000 board feet of lumber that would be produced from the trees could be disposed of readily because of the local demand for home-grown lumber.

Mr. Oehring realized that it would be impossible to hire any men for cutting, bucking, and skidding the logs due to the local shortage of labor. However, he got these jobs done.

Although Bill is past 70 years old, he and a neighbor boy cut down the trees on Saturdays. This was no small job, since some of the trees were over 24 inches in diameter.

During the week, while his "hired help" was attending school, Mr. Oehring trimmed the branches, cut the trees into logs, and burned the brush. The operator of the sawmill, who had moved his mill

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The Conservation Commission believes that state recreation areas should be open during all seasons of the year so that the public may enjoy to the fullest nature's ever-changing picture. Spring, with its melting ice and swelling buds, changes the panorama almost from minute to minute.

State Parks . . .

(Continued from page 121)

operation of the state recreation system, formal opening and closing have not been advisable.

On some occasions, because of conditions prevailing within an area, it has been necessary to close the park for a limited time as, for instance, last year when the Ledges and other areas were closed because of floods and flood damage. Another condition which necessitates occasional temporary closing of individual areas is the partial disintegration of the bituminous roads. Soft spots occur, and if traffic is permitted too soon holes develop, which are not only dangerous to vehicles, but require considerable time and funds to repair. Each year an expenditure ranging from \$100 to \$5,000 per mile is required to maintain these smooth-riding, dust-free surfaces.

Throughout the fall and winter months the employees of the Division of Lands and Waters of the State Conservation Commission, which has charge of the recreation areas, have been making plans and preparations for your spring visit. Although little new construction has been undertaken since Pearl Harbor, in several instances projects under way at that time have been completed with materials that were on hand. Most emergency repairs have been made with sal-

vage material, and although in some areas there is need for improved facilities, the areas are in good condition and ready for your use.

One of the major winter tasks in the parks is that of wood cutting. Diseased trees must be removed. Certain other trees that are undesirable or are crowding out more desirable specimens are taken down. From time to time certain distant views are obscured and it becomes necessary to remove those trees which are blocking the view. The wood from trees removed is used in the fireplaces. However, not all areas are able to furnish sufficient supplies of wood to carry through the entire picnic season and it is necessary to bring in wood from some other place.

Spring house cleaning in the parks is a big task. Picnic tables, benches and buildings require painting, repairs and other maintenance. Water and sanitary facilities require constant upkeep and supervision. Water supplies in the parks are constantly checked and periodically drinking water samples are analyzed at the laboratory at Iowa City.

This spring over a ton of grass seed has already been sown in the heavy use picnic areas, and the never-ending task of keeping the parks in order is in full swing.

Cabin camping has proved extremely popular during the past

DES MOINES COUNTY FIELD TRIALS

By Clarke Venable

Some autumn day when the Red Gods hold a convention to select a one-course trial ground precisely suited to their demands for colorful vistas, this reporter will lay a ten spot against a pottering mouse hunter that such convention will fix upon the area chosen by the Des Moines County Sportman's Club of Burlington, Iowa. And should I lose the ten and win the potterer, I'll then wager him against what-have-you that he will never run better than last among the ever-increasing number of good dogs being attracted to the annual trials being held by this exceedingly energetic young club.

Man and boy this reporter has been following bird dogs since the day when Heck was the pup you've heard about. From North and South I've heard field trial judges utter those nerve-tingling words, "Cut 'em loose, gentlemen." Over the years I have seen many one-course trials, the majority of which are too limited and too artificial to make sure of picking the best dogs. But the Burlington boys have a natural. Indeed, it is a judges' course—a place where competent judges can select the best dogs. It is also a dog's course, and it is a handlers' setting. Yes, sir, in those Burlington hills in October one can weed out the soft-

hearted and the potterers and find the real dogs.

Only four years ago this Iowa group of sportsmen held their first trial; they began by running of Spot and young Judy. But the boys were wise enough to choose a judge with wisdom to point the way—Dr. J. G. E. Hinkle of Bethany, Missouri, who has been father confessor to this unusually energetic group. Today this growing club is making a serious bid for wider recognition. The day is not far distant when a win on those rolling hills will mean what a win should always mean, i. e., a big hearted dog, pouring it on by handling kindly, moving over natural course good enough to prove real merit.

As for mention of any one club member, officer or otherwise, would be unfair unless the whole club roster were given. Here is a group of men really pulling together. They are hospitable, kind, generous, sporting. They really have a team.—The American Field

Oh, how I love to sit and fish
And fish and sit and think,
And think and fish and sit
And wish that I could get
drink.

—A Conservationist Subscriber.

Mocking birds vary greatly their powers of mimicry. Some have been known to imitate the songs of more than thirty different birds within a period of ten minutes.

few years. Cabins in Backbone, Dolliver, Lake Wapello, Lake of Three Fires, Lacey-Keosauqua, Ledges, Pine Lake and Springbrook are available for public use. Reservations may be made through the resident custodian in each of these parks. From advance reservations it appears that cabin camping this season will be more popular than ever before.

A new group camp was opened at Springbrook State Park in 1944 and will be available again this year. The camp contains a mess hall, hospital, administration build-

ing and other facilities sufficient for a maximum of 125 persons.

At the present time indications are that concessions will operate at Backbone (bathhouse area only), Pine Lake, Beeds Lake, Lake Wapello, Lake Keosauqua, Lake Macbride, Mill Creek, Gull Point, Lacey-Keosauqua, Springbrook, Lake Marshall, Lake Ahquabi and Ledges.

Although the Conservation Commission is operating under the handicap of labor and material shortages, all state recreation areas are in order and ready for use.



Cabin camping has proved extremely popular during the past few years in state parks. Reservations for these cabins may be made through the resident custodian in each of the parks.

Our State Bird and Its Rival

By George R. Bowne

ON MARCH 22, 1933, a bird was chosen by the 45th General Assembly as the official Iowa bird. The little songster selected was the eastern goldfinch, the legislators acting upon the suggestion of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, the statewide organization of Iowa bird fans.

The goldfinch was not the unanimous choice of the ornithologists, however, several other birds being mentioned for the honor, one in particular, the dickcissel, running a tight race in the polling.



The Eastern goldfinch was chosen Iowa's official bird on March 22, 1933, by the 45th General Assembly. Here a leg-banded eastern goldfinch (wild canary, thistle bird) eating buckwheat from the hand of the bander.—U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Photo.

It is stated on unimpeachable authority that during the heated discussions and voting in the I. O. meeting and later in the state legislature, both candidates, undisturbed by the election, went joyfully about their business of filling their stomachs with weed seeds and worms and the outdoors with duty and music. Since that memorable day more than 12 years ago, the bird-loving champions of the two contestants have watched with critical eyes the behavior of the candidates, seeking some sign of hauteur on the part of the goldfinch or indication of jealousy by the dickcissel. The observers have seen, however, only the two lovely and lovable birds living their melodious existence, each in its own unaffected way much as it is from time immemorial.

Our State Bird, The Goldfinch

Our state bird, the eastern goldfinch, also commonly called wild canary and thistle bird, is a small, strikingly beautiful creature. It is brilliant lemon yellow color with brown and forehead rich black, and tail and wings black with white markings.

Roberts in his monumental "Birds of Minnesota" says: "If actions and expressions of birds are any indication of their dispositions and feelings, the handsome little goldfinch is one of the most joyous and light-hearted of our feathered throng. Sociable and genial among its kind, cheery and musical of voice, and gay and

happy in demeanor, it goes frolicking through the summertime in little troops or couplets with an abandon and happy-go-lucky air that suggests that it had never a care nor duty in the whole year round."

The goldfinch is gregarious, and small companies may be closely approached while they are busily engaged in pulling the feathery plumes from ripened thistle heads and snipping off the seeds for food, a practice which has earned for them the name "thistle bird." If disturbed from their thistle patch, they leave in a melodious undulating flight, appearing much as a group of boys sliding "belly-booster" up and down long invisible airwaves.

Food Habits Beneficial

The food habits of the goldfinch are very beneficial, consisting almost entirely of insects and weed seeds, a single stomach having been found to contain as many as 2,200 harmful plant lice eggs.

Our state bird is one of the last to nest, often not beginning its household duties until August, at a time of year when many birds have already departed for southern climes. The nest is made from the down of thistles and fine grasses, is compact and durable, usually located in a berry bush, thistle, or other low shaded shrub. From three to six unmarked pale bluish-white eggs are laid.

It is surprising to many that the wild canary is commonly found throughout the winter, and it is listed as a permanent resident in Iowa. The observer will not find the goldfinch in its bright blacks and yellows of spring and summer during the wintertime, however, for when nesting is over and the cold winds begin to blow, he changes into a drab sparrow-like plumage until spring.

Runner-Up, The Dickcissel

The goldfinch's rival for state bird honors, the dickcissel, does not stay during winter, for he is a bird of the summer sun and is never happier than when perched on a wire in the pitiless glare of the shadeless midsummer prairies. The dickcissel also is a small bird. It has a brownish back streaked with black, gray, and darker brown. The head and sides of the neck are gray. It has a black throat patch and a yellow breast, sometimes fading to dull white. Because of its coloration, its manner of flight, and its clear call, it has sometimes been called the "little meadowlark." Old pastures and the edges of timothy fields are among the most favored haunts of this vivacious little bird. As one drives along the highways or country roads during the late spring or summer, he may observe this bird perched on the low-hanging telephone wires, where he may mistake it for a young meadowlark. At a distance it is difficult to recognize this little fellow from other summer field songsters.

The bird gets its name from the simple song with which it makes cheery the fence rows and roadsides where it is found. The call seems to sound like a sizzling repetition of its name "dickcissel."

The bird is of great value to agriculture because of its food habits. It is preeminently an eater of grasshoppers, varying this and other insect diets with large quantities of weed seeds.

The nest of the dickcissel is ordinarily placed on the ground and is sheltered by a tuft of grass in meadows or hayfields. It is constructed principally of dried grasses with some leaves, weed stems, rootlets, and shrubs of cornhusks. It is usually lined with fine grass or horsehair and contains four or five plain pale blue eggs.

You have now become acquainted with the official bird of Iowa, the eastern goldfinch, and its rival for the honor, the dickcissel. Come to know them well, for they will help to gladden your hours afield.

Forestry Chips

(Continued from page 123)

to the woodlot, skidded the logs with the farm tractor, which he also used for power on his sawmill.

The revenue from this three-quarter acre woodlot equals the total income that would be derived from an average three-quarter acre of Iowa crop land if it were in a three-year rotation of corn, oats and hay for the last 28 years. In addition, the woodlot did not require a yearly expenditure of labor nor the necessity of buying high-priced machinery to produce the crop.

Mr. Oehring's 20,000 board feet woodlot is a challenge to Iowa farmers who want to make the



Domestic lumber is in great demand. It must be properly cured, however. Proper piling for curing is not only important to assure seasoning without warping, but also permits use as required without tearing the pile down.—Soil Conservation Service Photo.

most effective use of every acre of land they own. Many farms have small areas of good land that is not cultivated because it is unhandy to work with the rest of the crop land. These areas can be put to work quickly and cheaply growing trees. At harvesting time these

America's Bird Dogs



ENGLISH SETTER RATES HIGH AT TRIALS, SHOWS

By Jack Hewins

On almost any autumn day, in almost any American field where the upland birds are apt to be hiding, you'll find Old Perfection, the English setter, nosing down the corn rows or coursing through the stubble or poking his beautiful inquisitive face into the fence corner's heavy growth.

Easily trained, courageous, diligent, he has made himself a part of the American bird hunting tradition, and if there is a chunk of bird cover in America he hasn't found it really isn't worth finding. He and the pointer are the two big rivals of the field trials; he challenges the chestnut-hued Irish setter for attention at the bench shows; he yields to no other dog in under-the-gun hunting ability.

Silky haired, with heavy feathering under belly and tail and back of his strong, long legs, he stands 23 to 25 inches at the shoulder, somewhat smaller than either the Irish setter or pointer.

His basic color is white with spots—"ticking"—of black or orange or liver, often with tan markings around the muzzle. Even a bluish ticking is not unknown.

His name—"setter"—is a hold-over from dogdom's forgotten past, when birds were netted and it was the job of the dog to find the covey and crouch while the master cast his net. Today he "points", standing rigidly as he faces toward the hiding game.

The breed was brought to perfection in England nearly a century ago by R. L. Purcell-Llewellyn and Edward Lavarack, possibly after a trend was set by a cross of spaniel and Spanish pointer.

Many breeders and sportsmen refer to their dogs strictly as Llewellyn or Llewellyn setters, discarding the "English" in favor of the name of the strain which has become a favorite in field work. The Lavarack strain often takes preference for kennel shows.

—AP Newsfeatures, Reprinted by Permission of the Des Moines Register & Tribune.

landowners can find out for themselves how trees pay dividends, for according to Mr. Oehring, the advantage of growing a tree crop lies in that you can harvest it when the demand for lumber is great.

Floods Decrease 1944 Pheasant Production in Story County

By Homer E. Fairchild and George O. Hendrickson

HOW destructive is excessive rainfall to pheasant production? Finding the answer to this question became one of the chief objectives of pheasant research in 1944. Briefly, the young pheasant crop was reduced one-third to one-half in Story county by heavy rains.

According to measurements at the Iowa State College Agronomy Farm near Ames, a total of 32.59 inches of rain fell during five spring and summer months, April through August, 14.32 inches above the normal rainfall of 18.27 inches for those months. About two-thirds of the excess precipitation came in three downpours. May 18 brought 4.53 inches of rain and May 19 an additional 3.68 inches. All creeks and Skunk River overflowed their banks, and water backed into numerous Ames business houses and home basements, the most destructive flood in the town's history. The third downpour of 1.71 inches came on June 8.

For study purposes, three areas totaling 4,601 acres, each somewhat different in plant cover and topography, were selected within a five-mile radius of Ames. Two upland areas of 890 and 1,460 acres north and west of Ames, respectively, were selected as typical of well-drained farmland. Southeast of Ames a Skunk River area of 2,301 acres contained 595 mostly steep upland and 1,706 bottom acres. About one-fourth of the bottom land usually tilled was not put in crops because of floods and siltation. Corn planting was very late in Story county because of wet ground conditions. The mid-May floods delayed much of the up-

land planting until June and on flooded bottom land planting dates ranged from June 12 to July 4.

The spring and summer counts of adult birds indicated a total breeding stock of about 220 pheasants on the three study areas, or nearly one adult to 21 acres. The ratio of sexes was approximately one cock to 1.5 hens. No adult pheasant drowning was reported on the upland areas during the May 18-19 floods, but on the Skunk River bottom land some drowned adults were found by a farmer.

Of 32 nests found during the summer, 10 were successful, 8 were broken up by mowers and binders, and 2 were known to have been destroyed by predatory birds. The average number of eggs in a successful nest was 9.4 and 8.2 hatched. These figures are somewhat lower than those expected in a normal season. Pheasants were very scarce on the Skunk River bottom land from May 18 to July and only two nests were found on land that had been flooded. The earliest successful nest recorded was seen first on June 29 with eight pheasants just hatched. Only one farmer on the areas reported seeing young pheasants before July 1. Although both field investigators and farmers undoubtedly missed some nests, the indications are that early nestings were largely unsuccessful. A total of 50 young pheasants in 11 different broods were seen in the summer, averaging 4.5 young to a brood, which is a low figure. Possibly five of the 11 broods were hatched in June, but none was seen that was thought on the basis of size and

feathering to have been hatched earlier in the season. Other broods were detected by field signs, such as dust baths, molting debris and droppings.

The fall population for the observed 4,601 acres was estimated at 548 pheasants, or about one bird to 9 acres. This represents an increase of about 148 percent above the spring seedstock of 220 pheasants. That rate of increase is about one-third less than a rate considered necessary to replace losses in a given population under favorable conditions.

A late summer census on the upland area west of Ames showed approximately one bird to 6 acres. One 240-acre farm of that west area had about one bird to 3 acres. Slightly more than one-third of this area was in corn and soy beans, and about one-third was in small grains, hay and grass suitable for nesting. As the fields were smaller than on the other two areas the interspersed crops favored pheasants the most on the west area. On the Skunk River area the estimate was a bird to 14 acres and the north area had a pheasant to 7 acres.

On several days early in the hunting season experimental shooting was conducted on parts of the three study areas by parties of three or four hunters to compare the number of flushed birds with the summer population counts in the same fields and on adjacent land. At the west area, on the farm with a bird to 3 acres, flushed pheasant counts while hunting on the opening day of the season were comparable with pre-season estimates. The north area yielded lower numbers and in proportion to summer estimates. On the Skunk River bottom land no birds were put up and sign was scarce.

A January, 1945, inventory of pheasants on the study areas found the pheasants at one-third of the peak summer numbers. In the Skunk River area there was a mid-winter population of 55-60 pheasants, whereas in winter, 1942-43, on the same area students of wildlife management at Iowa State College accounted for 90-100 birds. These mid-winter figures for 1943 and 1945 are in almost the same ratio as the populations for the preceding falls, one bird to 9.2 acres and one bird to 14 acres, respectively. Although figures are not at hand for such comparison at the other two areas, farmers are unanimously of the opinion there was a reduction in pheasants during the past year. Quite probably there was a strong shift of birds from parts of the north and west areas to nearby farms which had unpicked standing and shocked corn. Such food was more readily available than that in snow-covered fields of the study areas on which crops were quite closely harvested.

Some sportsmen were inclined to blame foxes for the short pheasant crop in Story county. But foxes are more numerous than they

NEW FISHING TACKLE AFTER THE WAR

Browsing around in one of the local sporting goods stores we observed that shelves are growing barer and barer of the items classed as "essential" by every good fisherman. The sad thing about it all is that no remedy for this situation appears near at hand.

Almost every tackle maker is engaged 100 per cent in war work, and in a class of production not soon to be terminated. This means that the tackle makers are not apt to get the green light for civilian production, even though the material might be available.

A tremendous backlog of orders is being built up by the inability to produce wanted items now. There should be no unemployment in the fishing tackle factories for some little time after the war.

Sometimes we just sit back and let our imagination run a bit. We cannot help but wonder what steel will do to bamboo after the war. It takes years to produce a fine bamboo rod, because the bamboo must be carefully cured and seasoned. On the other hand, a steel rod can be turned out in a matter of days, and with the added knowledge of fine steels gained from the war effort, are the steel makers going to chase the bamboo rods right out of the picture? It is alleged that we shall see steel drawn lighter and finer than ever. Looks bad for bamboo.

What part will plastics play in our tackle picture in the postwar era? Are we going to get plastic reels, plastic baits, plastic rod handles, and other plastic tackle items? This is something to ponder over. How about silk lines? Will nylon production be so stepped up that the silk line will be completely overshadowed by nylon price and quality?

We confess that we do not know the answers. Of one thing we are sure, however, and that is that great changes will occur, and that millions will be spent for new fishing equipment in the postwar period. With customary Yankee ingenuity our makers will produce the best, and the best will be none too good when G. I. Joe comes marching home.—Davenport Democrat.

were in the past several years in surrounding counties, as well as in Story. Because the pheasant crop was better in the adjacent counties north, east and west than in Story, it does not seem logical to lay all the blame on the fox. And the adjacent counties did not have so much excessive rainfall in heavy downpours during the nesting season. Rather, delayed and lessened nesting with slightly smaller clutches and hatches and greater loss of young birds than for an average season, all brought about by excessive rainfall, were largely responsible for the low pheasant production in Story county in 1944.



The nesting season is one of the critical periods for pheasants in Iowa, and there is a definite need for additional nesting cover in many areas. This hen selected a field of red clover for her nest site, and the eggs were safely hatched before the clover was cut. Many nests are destroyed during haying, especially in the first cutting of alfalfa. —R. F. Trump Photo.

State Forestry . . .

(Continued on page 123)

movement in Iowa. Others who had a prominent part in the work of the new association were Professors H. C. Price, J. L. Budd of Iowa State College, C. A. Moser of Des Moines, and Elmer Reeves of Waverly.

Tax Exemption for Forests

One of the first moves of the Iowa Park and Forestry Association in 1901 was to sponsor the so-called "Secor Bill," which was later known as the Forest and Fruit Free Reservation Act. This proposed legislative measure was intended to correct some of the deficiencies of the previously enacted tax exemption bill already mentioned, which relieved the land owner of paying taxes, for a period of 10 years, on \$100 of the property valuation for each acre planted to trees. The new bill recommended provided for a substantial reduction of taxes on native as well as planted timber as long as a reasonable number of trees were kept growing on the land. The tax was to be levied on the timber tracts on the basis of an assessed valuation of one dollar per acre (now \$4.00 per acre). This proposed act recognized the inequality in taxing a growing crop of timber year after year on the same basis as a property which matured a crop each year. It was felt also that the tax subsidy would interest timber owners in retaining some of their lands of little agricultural value as permanent woodlots.

Although this act was first proposed for legislative action in 1901, it did not become a law until 1906. The law may not be ideal, yet it has served a useful purpose. By 1920 the timberland listed for tax reduction under the act amounted to 14,700 acres, by 1933 the reservations had increased to 36,000, and in 1943 to 56,000 acres.

The Iowa Park and Forestry Association later became the Iowa Forestry and Conservation Association, and still later was known as the Iowa Conservation Association.

The organization was active sporadically for a period of about 25 years, and had an influence on conservation development in the state through association meetings, publication of proceedings and for a period of seven years by the publication of a quarterly journal, "Iowa Conservation."

The Iowa Conservation Association as a body and through its members exerted a strong influence in bringing about the initiation of the state park program in Iowa. The association was active in developing support for the legislative action in 1917, authorizing the establishment of state parks. Many other agencies made substantial contributions to this effort. Notable among these was the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs. This action provided for the appointment of a Board of Conservation of four members delegated

THUMBING A RIDE

(Backwards)

By Allen Green



*A tree-toad dozed on the branch of a tree.
"It's going to rain," he sang to me,
"Won't you give me a lift to my abode
In the hollow tree at the side of the road?"*



*So he hopped on my thumb for the tree he'd spied,
And I said, as I walked, "You're THUMBING-A-RIDE."
"No, no," cried the toad, "you're terribly dumb,
Not THUMBING-A-RIDE—just RIDING-A-THUMB."*

with the responsibility of "investigating places in Iowa valuable as objects of natural history and forest reserves . . . and investigating the means of promoting forestry."

The first Board of Conservation included E. R. Harlan, Curator of the State Historical Department, as ex officio member, Dr. L. H. Pammel of Ames, Joseph Kelso of Bellevue, and J. F. Ford of Fort Dodge as the other members. The board was organized December 27, 1918, when Dr. Pammel was elected chairman and Mr. Harlan secretary of the board.

The Iowa Conservation magazine for January-March, 1919, contained a map of Iowa, data for which had been compiled by association members, which showed suggested locations for Iowa state parks. The many state parks, forest reserves, and state forests which have since been acquired, almost without exception, fit in with the location indicated on this map. The park movement began to bear fruit with the dedication of the Backbone State Park in Delaware county in May, 1920—Iowa's first state park.

STUDY OF EFFECTS OF DDT APPLICATIONS ON WILDLIFE

During the past three years there has been expanding use of the organic chemical DDT for the control of insects responsible for sickness and discomfort among our armed forces. This has been so successful that widespread interest has arisen in its possible use for the control of other insects, and experimental beginnings have been made to determine its value for control of crop and forest insects.

Up to now little knowledge is available as to what harm may be done to wildlife should DDT be applied on a large scale, but plans have been formulated to obtain needed information. The purpose of this statement is to acquaint interested individuals and organizations with these plans so that all concerned may know what steps have been taken to get the facts on this timely conservation problem.

This coming spring DDT will be applied experimentally by the Bureau of Entomology and Plant

Quarantine of the U. S. Department of Agriculture to several forest areas, chiefly in the Northeast. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel will conduct detailed investigations on these sprayed areas during the spring in cooperation with the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine to determine the direct and indirect effects of the applications on wildlife. Entomologists of the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine will make studies on the effects of this new insecticide on the insect fauna as a whole. The experimental spraying will be on a scale sufficiently large to permit drawing conclusions that will apply should DDT be used in operational insect control.

Although preliminary studies seem to indicate that few, if any, birds and mammals are likely to be killed by DDT itself, indirect harm may come through reduction in insect-food supplies, especially when applications are made shortly before or during the nesting season. DDT is a relatively stable compound that is insoluble in water. Under forest conditions a single low-concentration application (in oil) for prolonged periods has continued to kill insects that have come in contact with the minute crystals that form after the solvent has evaporated, thus bringing about a prolonged reduction in the total insect population. Applications of DDT made from aircraft at the rate of five pounds per acre have killed amphibians and fishes either directly or through their taking poisoned food. The effect of DDT on these groups at different rates of application will be investigated under a variety of field conditions.

Experiments to determine levels of chronic and acute poisoning from DDT taken internally by bobwhites, mallards, various species of small rodents, mice, rabbits, fish, and other cold-blooded vertebrates, are now in progress in Fish and Wildlife Service Laboratories.

The results of the field and laboratory studies planned for this year will indicate whether the use of DDT for the control of pest insects is hazardous to wildlife. The results will also serve as a guide to the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine in developing formulas, dosages, and methods of application that avoid hazards to wildlife and other beneficial forms of life.

It's Your Bulletin

New subscribers to the "Iowa Conservationist" during the month of March totaled 776, and we are pleased with the way the subscriptions are coming in. We are pleased, too, that so many subscribers are sending in photographs, articles, and field notes, for after all, it's your magazine. There is no profit on the sale of this bulletin, but it is published at actual cost for your entertainment and information. We welcome suggestions, criticisms, or what-have-you. If you don't agree with things expressed in these pages, don't hesitate to mail us your written comments. You have a right to voice your sentiments, regardless of whether or not they happen to coincide with those of the editor and the State Conservation Commission.

Famous Iowa Trees

From Local Legend and
Historical Fact



KEOKUK'S LOOKOUT

By Ora Williams

Curator, State Department of
History and Archives

ONE balmy spring day a little more than a century ago the wooded hills along the Des Moines valley threw back in echoes the shrill scream of a steamboat whistle for the first time. The age long stillness of the forests was broken, the nesting robins started from their coverts and a few deer scrambled wildly along paths leading to the high prairies. A small vessel was rounding the "rattlesnake bend" of Iowa's largest river just below the Racoon forks. There were men in uniform on the boat, a company of United States dragoons, also a band of Sac and Fox Indians and their chief Keokuk. The next day, May 20, 1843, Capt. Allen hoisted a flag with 13 stripes and 26 stars at the location of Fort Des Moines. Chief Keokuk looked on sullenly and in thoughtful mood. Then he and his family moved out on the edge of a low plateau far to the east and established their camp, not far from where the Iowa state capitol now stands.

Chief Keokuk had noted, as he came along the winding river, a ridge of high hills to the south overlooking the entire region about the juncture of the two rivers. He saw a fine young elm tree standing alone on the ridge. When his camp had been established, the chief beat a path to this elm tree, and climbing up to the largest limbs he found that he could see the new military camp in the distance and all between. It was a splendid lookout. He might have need for a watching post, for there were hostile Indians who came down the valley without notice.

For three years the Sac and Fox Indians had their homes near the new fort at Racoon forks. The Sacs, under Keokuk, were located to the east and that was where the government agency had been built and most of the traders had their

CATFISH, DID YOU SAY?

It is reported that a farmer along the river south of us had difficulty last summer. It seems that every night his cows came home for milking someone had beat him to the milk. The cows were invariably dry. A helpful neighbor finally suggested that it might be that in wading in the river to keep cool the cows were sucked dry by the fish. "I'll fix that," said the farmer. He proceeded immediately to attach fish hooks to each teat of the cow's udder and promptly dispatched the cows to the pasture again. The next night the cows did not come home at all. The farmer became frantic. He hurried to the pasture along the river, and sure enough, there stood the cows in the river. He peeled off his clothes and waded out to start them home. Sure enough, he found the trouble. Each cow had hooked four big catfish, and as far as walking was concerned, the bovine nimrods had exceeded the "bag limit."—Bellevue Leader.

"We may say of angling as Dr. Roteler said of strawberries, 'Doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did.' And so (if I might be judge), God never did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling."—Izaak Walton.

factories. The Foxes, under Chief Poweshiek, camped in the edge of the woods to the north, on the west side of the Des Moines. They were much nearer to the dragoon at Fort Des Moines and nicely located for hunting along the Racoon valley.

Often did Chief Keokuk send out a trusty scout to climb the elm tree just beyond the "rattlesnake bend" and to keep a sharp eye for any intruders, either white or red whose presence might forebode trouble. Many were the steamboats that came puffing up the river in the following years. It was a fine place for meeting when there were to be ceremonials on the open land to the west that was known as "Keokuk's Prairie." The elm became a well known landmark.

The elm stands there yet. No Indian ever rests on its limbs. The Des Moines river runs smoothly along as of old. Instead of the whistle of steamboats there is the smoke from an electric power plant not far away. On the level plain there are scores of queer tanks that contain oil or gasoline piped from distant places. The footpath gave way to a rough road, and in time the latter became a paved highway.

But "Keokuk's Lookout" was left standing. It is in the road. Only a few feet away is the concrete pavement. Fast going chariots speed by and the drivers never see the tree. But the old timers had often spoken of the tree as "Keokuk's Lookout," and it is now a majestic elm rising so high that from its upper footholds one could see all over the city of Des Moines, the capital of Iowa.

RADIO WAVES AFFECT PIGEONS

The Army Signal Corps may have found the answer to this question: "When is a homing pigeon not a homing pigeon, or at least a poor one?"

The Signal Corps reveals that it is trying to learn why radio waves mess up a homing pigeon's sense of direction. That pigeons are affected by radio waves has long been suspected.

Signal corpsmen report that three separate tests with different groups of pigeons had almost identical effects. Each group consisted of 10 birds, and each was subdivided in two groups of five. The tests were held at a radio station 10 miles from their home lofts.

The first wave of five birds was released in each test when the station was transmitting—the second, 15 minutes later, when the station was silent.

The birds released during transmission seemed completely bewildered. They circled erratically for 15 or 20 minutes near the station, then took off uncertainly for their lofts, taking up to 52 minutes for the 10-mile flight.

Birds released while the station was silent circled briefly and made off promptly for home, arriving there in 18 to 21 minutes.—Texas Game and Fish.

TO BURN OR NOT TO BURN?

That is the question that many land owners ask themselves each spring. Usually they succumb to the impulse to "clean up the place." Or they may burn over their lands because they think it improves the subsequent growth or destroys insects.

For this reason it is interesting to note that experiments with bluegrass pasture in Wisconsin showed that burning in winter or spring reduced yields the following year from 52 to 71 per cent. These results were believed to be due to the damage by fire to the roots and crowns of the grass plants, some of which were killed entirely.

The Illinois Department of Conservation reports that burning of pasture lands in early spring not only fails to improve the grass, but may cut grass production in half

Outdoor Oddities

BY WALT HARVEY

ONE PURPLE MARTIN
WILL CATCH AS MANY AS
2000 MOSQUITOES
AROUND YOUR HOME IN
ONE EVENING



North American snakes are alleged to travel at a much faster rate than they are capable of. They cannot "out-run" a man in the open, although they have been credited with doing so. One species of king snake has a maximum speed of .72 miles per hour, a bull snake of 1.18 miles per hour, and the red racer of California 3.60 miles per hour.

All snakes are capable of swimming as well as climbing trees or bushes.—The Missouri Conservationist.

In 1942, 1,326 prosecutions were made for game violations. Fines assessed totaled \$29,008.75.

in a single year. Observations in Illinois have revealed that on land consistently burned, the perennial grasses and other more valuable forage plants are rapidly replaced by annual weeds that are nearly worthless for pasture.

The report goes on to say that a still greater loss caused by fire, although not so apparent in a single year, is the destruction of soil fertility. Burning off grass or woodland litter increases water run-off from 5 to 30 times and speeds up soil erosion 4 to 11 times.

It might also be mentioned that spring burning destroys the nests and eggs of countless valuable song and game birds which would have been diligent destroyers of insects all summer long if their nests had not been ravaged by fire.—Minnesota Conservation Volunteer.



Burning reduces grass yields in pastures, stimulates weed growth, increases water run-off, speeds up soil erosion, and destroys nests and eggs of countless valuable song and game birds—so why burn?